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The Preventive Conservation of Contemporary Works of Art

Some Case Studies

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The Preventive Conservation of Contemporary Works of Art: Some Case Studies

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Abstract: The conceptual evolution and the material renovation of contemporary artwork have generated many problems in its conservation. The study of the major causes of alteration and the established recommendations for new artwork preservation can be seen in the criteria followed in different examples of contemporary art: the consideration of the possibility to forbid lending Pablo Picasso's "Guernica;" the maintenance of Eduardo Chillida's "The Comb of the Wind" at an exhibition under bad conditions; and the re-edition and exhibition of Richard Serra's lost piece of artwork, "Equal-Parallel: Guernica-Bengasi." Artists and selected works are referents internationally. The works presented for study have different technical support and various conservation problems. They are also found in Spanish collections or have been exhibited in Spain, which was a main factor in the decision to use them in this study. In conclusion, there are different reasons why conservators and curators have needed to extend their classical working criteria, namely the wide diversity of the constitutive material of contemporary artwork, the difficulty to predict its durability, and the concept of reduced durability. Thus, each particular case has to be studied with the artists very closely, and many choices need to be made, such as the manner of documentation, whether or not to reproduce performance art, or how to re-edit works that have been lost among other solutions.

Keywords: Preventive Conservation, Contemporary Art, Artistic Materials

Introduction and Objectives

The study of the conservation of contemporary art is of great interest, as these works present very specific problems deriving from their concept, material characteristics, handling, exhibition, storage, and registration (Llamas 2011). The use of new materials originating from industry, cast-offs, or directly from nature, together with the renovation of techniques, mediums (digital, multimedia), and the placement or location of the piece (outdoors in nature, historical buildings, city, etc.), now form a part of the evolution of the concept of permanence and the value of the work of art, which have been reestablished due to the ephemeral quality of a given piece and the non-objectification of art. Some works of contemporary art, such as performance, happening, media art, and conceptual art, is no longer an object that only can be bought and sold, but has rather been transfigured into an experience inextricably linked to the life of the artist, establishing a direct relationship with the public who interpret the work and complete it. Hence, the most essential feature is the concept, (i.e. the message that is transmitted and the reflection it stimulates in the viewer). In many cases, a work of contemporary art is intangible, requiring the aid of photography, filming, and registration in order to preserve the memory of its existence, as occurs with happenings and performance art. These channels are also used to document installations and interventions, serving as tools for conserving and recording the work of art. Multimedia (video, radio, television, slide shows, online art, etc.) is often used in the work itself as a means of production (digital art, art net, etc.), and the presence of these mediums is therefore becoming more prevalent for archiving, producing, and promoting works of contemporary art (Bellido and Durán 2008). From the middle of the twentieth century to the present, conservators and curators have seen the advent of new methods of conservation based on the re-edition, reproduction, and format transformation of artistic works, which in turn is generating a new set of criteria and requirements for safeguarding these works, as compared to traditional methods of conservation and restoration (Montorsi 2005). We may add to this the appearance of the field of study, work, and research of preventive conservation during the second

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half of the twentieth century, which was inevitably linked to the concept of the conservation of art created or produced since then, inextricably linking the two areas of study to be addressed in this paper: contemporary art and preventive conservation. This paper focuses on defining and examining the difficulties inherent in the conservation of works of contemporary art, studying the new criteria that are being applied in this field, and detecting some new lines of action, mediums, and tools that can be used to respond to these challenges through a close examination of various case studies, to later implement general knowledge in this field (ICOM-CC 2008).

The methodology used includes bibliographic documentation, visits to specialized art museums and galleries, and personal interviews with artists and professionals in the field. The works studied are of noteworthy significance from the standpoint of conservation, due to the international relevance of these works and their authors, the difference of supports and concepts presented between them, and because they belong to Spanish collections or have been exhibited in Spain. In this way, the study is restricted to the location in which the pieces chosen for the case study appear. These works include Picasso's *Guernica*, Eduardo Chillida's *Comb of the Wind, To Pour Milk into a Glass* by David Lamelas, and *Paisaje agramatical = Ungrammatical Landscape* by Narelle Jubelin, as well as many other examples mentioned in passing. Given the different material characteristics and varied conceptual content of these works, their close study can provide us with a broad vision of the topic under study.

The Origins of Preventive Conservation

We should first consider the definition of the term "preventive conservation": "preventive conservation is fundamentally a strategy based on a systematic work method, the goal of which is to prevent or minimize deterioration by monitoring and controlling risks that affect or could affect a cultural asset" (IPCE n.d.).

Preventive conservation originated at the International Council of Museums (ICOM), held in Paris in 1945. The International Institute for the Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works was founded in London in 1950. In 1958, H.J. Plenderleith published *The Conservation of Antiquities and Works of Art*, the jumping off point for the study and development of the preventive conservation of works of art. In 1963, the ICOM Committee for Conservation was founded for the protection and preservation of cultural heritage. In 2000, the ICCROM Conference held in Vantaa, Finland, addressed this very topic, stressing the importance of institutional leadership and planning for the conservation of works of art (ICCROM 2000; Baglioni and Losada 2000). In 2011, Spain presented their *National Plan for Preventive Conservation*, which stressed the need for "training, access to specialized information, and increased public awareness of those accessing our cultural heritage, an aspect which has been largely overlooked" (National Preventive Conservation Plan 2011, 5). This plan "is justified by the need to implement a preventive strategy as a fundamental principle in the conservation of Cultural Heritage, as well as by the existing deficiencies and difficulties for applying such a strategy for certain mediums" (Idem 2011, 3). All of these interventions and regulations have spurred a general interest in preventive conservation in recent years, essential for contemporary works of art, although no specific reference is made to them in these documents. However, if there are actions by museums and organizations, such as those carried out by the GEIIC (Spanish Group of International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works) which organizes the Contemporary Art Conservation Days at the National Museum Sofía Queen Art Centre (Spain) each year, and in 2019 has organized the twentieth edition (20th Day of Conservation of Contemporary Art).

New Aspects of the Conservation of Contemporary Art

Contemporary works of art display certain characteristics, which make their conservation more challenging than that of other cultural assets. These factors may be linked to aspects of the work itself, deriving from the material and conceptual evolution of art and affecting the materials, medium, means, and location of the works. Other difficulties may be external to the work and may be related to market demands, or to the environmental conditions for exhibition, storage, transport, and handling (Milner 1999).

The Renovation of Materials, Techniques, and Concepts

Since the end of the nineteenth century we have witnessed an unprecedented renovation of the material characteristics of works of art. The artistic object is now considered a vehicle for communication and an element of expression, and the materials with which it is created are fraught with significance (Bellido and Durán 2008). Artistic projects now use a wide range of materials, as well as new means, mediums, and locations to display the work of art.

This new concept broke with traditional techniques and materials (Althöfer 1991), causing a shift in the artistic materials available on the market, tending toward new sources, means of production, and components, for example: acrylic paints, and synthetic resins, etc. (Althöfer and Schinzel 2003). There was also a push to use materials not specifically designed for art, including everyday objects such as urinals (Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain* 1917), bottle racks, rubber tires (Robert Rauschenberg, *Monogram* 1959), cast-offs (Michelangelo Pistoletto, *Venus of the Rags* 1967–1974), and other utilitarian objects.

We saw a move to the use of industrial materials originally intended for other purposes like expanded polystyrene, silicon, plastic, and methacrylate, (Naum Gabo, *Translucent Variation on Spheric Theme* 1951), and industrial work techniques that could potentially generate specific difficulties for conservation that were applied to the creative process (Donald Judd, *Untitled* 1980). Edible products began to make their appearance like chocolate (Dieter Roth, *Schokoladenmeer* 1970), lettuce (Giovanni Anselmo, *Untitled* 1968), gelatine (Claes Oldenbug, *Life Mask* 1966), requiring occasional replacement due to their biodegradability (Duane Hanson, *Supermarket Lady* 1969), or they were simply left to deteriorate (Bellido and Durán 2008).

Animals appeared, both alive (Annis Kounellis, *12 Horses* 1969; Joseph Beuys, *I Like America and America Likes Me* 1974), and dead (Annette Messager, *Le Repos des Pensionnaires* 1971–72). Industrial objects also found their place such as engines, movie projectors, lights (Dan Flavin, *Untitled (To Marianne)* 1970), computer monitors, audio recording devices (Marina Abramovic, *Rhythm 10* 1973), or specific formats of television and video screens that became difficult to maintain or replace when they were no longer manufactured. Mediums changed as well, using the human body (Dennis Oppenheim, *Two Stage Transfer Drawing* 1971), city, or gallery walls.

Interventions and installations were located outdoors (Walter de Maria, *Lightning Field* 1977), in city centres, or inside historical buildings (Soledad Sevilla, *Toda la torre* 1990). Other works were based on action, and had to be filmed, registered, and documented to preserve a testimonial performance art (for example, Joseph Beuys, *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* 1960–1964), actions, happenings (Wolf Vostell, *Phenomena* 1965). The concept of permanence of a unique piece of work had been replaced by a fleeting work that could be reproduced again and again—or not.

These new materials, mediums, and concepts are not those traditionally dealt with when considering the conservation of classic works of art, and their preservation requires a new set of criteria and applications to address these new creations.

The Contemporary Artist

For the purpose of this article, it is important to know the positioning of the contemporary artist to be able to take it into account when preserving their work of art and not to alter their concept or intervene in its materiality without previously appearing. Therefore, the curator must take the perspective of the artists into consideration, whenever possible. The contemporary artist develops new techniques through experimentation and the search for a unique and personal style that identifies the work based on its originality, with a complete disregard for the assessment of traditional techniques. At times, the combination of materials is such that the piece proves quite difficult to conserve (Althöfer 1991).

New systems for educating artists provide training that focuses primarily on production and presentation, rather than on preservation. Many new artists are thus unaware of how their work will age, and this facet must be left to restorers and conservators (Idem 1991). It is also true that many authors are interested in showing their work at a certain time and/or place, and are accepting of subsequent natural transformation. This is the case of installations and interventions designed to interact with the space in which they are installed or developed (Noguer 2009) (Robert Smithson, *Spiral Jetty* 1970). These works may have unique conservation criteria based on documentation and publication in a catalogue, allowing for later distribution. The artist's intention or criteria for the conservation of a work may vary. He may wish to preserve the work in optimum conditions, with no signs of aging. Perhaps the artist is not interested in conserving the work over time, or simply has not considered this aspect, unaware of how the materials will age. In other cases, aging and deterioration form part of the work, because the temporal nature and/or transformation of the materials is inherent to the concept (Alves and Câmara 2013). In some cases, it is the intention of the artist for the work to disappear, aiming for a fleeting moment or activity that can be preserved only through visual and graphic documentation (Noguer 2009) (Gilbert and George, *Underneath the Arches, The Singing Sculpture* 1969). Novice artists are not particularly concerned with the environmental conditions required to conserve a piece of art, or with the specific measures required to protect the work during storage, shipping and exhibition. They likewise may not sign or date their works, making cataloguing tedious and creating difficulties for determining authorship.

The Contemporary Art Market

A great number of contemporary works of art have been moved or shipped since the 1980s due to the increased number of fairs, temporary exhibits, and art competitions (Alves and Câmara 2013). Large exhibits and specialized museums and galleries can generally provide proper security and conservation measures, but there are cases in which neither the event organizer nor the logistics operator will be held responsible for any damage or loss that may occur to a specific work of art. The result is that many works are unprotected during transport and exhibition (Llamas 2009). These works are often improperly handled (without cotton gloves, by unqualified personnel), and are inadequately packed for shipping in vehicles that lack the required anchoring devices or atmospheric conditions (Idem 2009).

The exhibitions themselves rarely offer the proper environmental conditions for preventive conservation, including relative humidity, temperature, lighting, and air quality (Guichen 1984). Safety and security measures do not provide full protection for damage or loss due to building collapse, theft, flooding, fire, vandalism, or acts of terrorism. It is essential to provide more general training and information (ICCROM 2003) on the preventive conservation of contemporary works of art, and raise awareness among artists, brokers, art educators, and the general public to show that proper handling and treatment is the best way to ensure the proper preservation of these cultural assets (Ward 1992).

Case Studies

The chosen works have been selected because they are examples known internationally for the relevance of their authors and the particularity of their supports. The *Guernica* is a large oil painting that due to its multiple exposures presents specific conservation problems. *Equal Parallel: Guernica-Benghazi* is a sculptural work of great size that suffered an almost inexplicable disappearance. *To Pour Milk into a Glass* is presented on a film stand that is now obsolete and must be updated to a current digital display media (these three works belong to the collection of the National Museum Sofía Queen Art Centre, Madrid). *The Comb of the Wind* is a sculptural group that is located outdoors in Guipúzcoa (Spain), partly in the sea, and *Ungrammatical Landscape* is an ephemeral work of art that was installed in the Guerrero Museum of Granada (Spain) for its exhibition and then disappeared. The temporary range covers 1937 to 2006, and the typological one includes painting, sculpture, cinema, and ephemeral art.

Guernica (Pablo Picasso 1937) is an emblematic and internationally recognized oil painting on canvas, which currently hangs in the National Museum Sofía Queen Art Centre in Madrid. It was commissioned by the Government of the Spanish Republic for display in the Spanish Pavilion at the International Exhibition of Arts and Techniques in Modern Life held in Paris in 1937, in the middle of the Spanish Civil War. Its enormous popularity derives from the numerous exhibitions in which it has been present, as well as from the time it hung in the Museum of Modern Art (MoMa) in New York, where it remained until it was returned to the Government of Spain in 1981, after a parliamentary democracy had been established in the country (Sedano 2002). It is a mural-sized piece standing 3.49 meters (11 ft 5 in) tall and 7.76 meters (25 ft 6 in) wide, and it has had to be disassembled various times for transport. The painting travelled thirty-seven times between 1938 and 1958, each time requiring the corresponding disassembly, rolling and unrolling of the canvas, and reassembly. It was retouched several times while at the MoMA. In 1957 the canvas was consolidated using a wax-resin lining, and it was strip lined around edges and corners; in 1962, the painted surface was cleaned and varnished; in 1964 it was treated for cracking; and in 1974 a graffiti inscription was removed from the canvas and the painting was varnished (Idem 2002). In 1981, following its transfer to Madrid, it was treated by members of the Spanish Historical Heritage Institute (IPHE), who consolidated the earlier lining that had been inserted along the edges.

A 1998 report on the condition of *Guernica* issued by the Department of Conservation and Restoration at the Reina Sofia National Art Centre Museum, under the direction of Pilar Sedano, provided a summary on the painting's state of repair, analysing each of its constituent parts (Sedano 2002). It indicated that the fragile condition of the painting at that moment was due to the various restorations it had undergone (using wax, resins, and relining, for the most part) and to the natural aging process (a combination of the canvas and the linseed oil used by Picasso, which had not yet been polymerized, and which could soften during cleaning and wear down the surface), in addition to its enormous dimensions 27m² (291ft²) and excessive weight, also posing an increased handling risk (Ruiz 2002). But what had clearly had the greatest impact on the painting were the numerous moves it had undergone and its particular characteristics (Sedano 2002).

The report explained that cracks and microcracks had been detected in the paint layer, potentially giving rise to flaking if the painting sustained strong vibration, shock, or abrupt changes in environmental conditions. The fabric had various deformations and tears, primarily at the corners and in the centre of the painting (Ruiz de Arcaute 2002), coinciding with vertical and parallel cracks in the paint, and with areas where the paint layer was thickest. The stiffness of the canvas as a result of the wax-resin lining accentuated its extreme fragility. Marisa Gómez of the IPHE commented, "Any intervention that is carried out on Picasso's work must be minimal, simply eliminating the most extensive wax visible on both sides of the painting." (Gómez 2002, 75). Picasso himself recommended that the canvas be stabilized following the 1957 restoration due to the damage it had sustained throughout its lifetime, which he called "war injuries" (Buces 2002, 214).

The Comb of the Wind (Eduardo Chillida 1977) is a set of sculptures made of reco steel, very similar to weathering or COR-TEN steel, installed in la Concha Bay in San Sebastian (Gipúzcoa, Spain)² The work comprises of three large pieces measuring 215 x 177 x 185 cm (85 x 70 x 73 inches), installed on rocky outcrops with several dozen meters between each piece. It is exposed to a wide variety of atmospheric elements (rain, saltwater, wind, sun, variations in temperature, humidity, salt spray, etc.), and to the lashes of the wind and waves of the Cantabrian Sea (Elósegui 2008). Two conservation studies have been done to date to assess the damage caused by these environmental agents. The first, which was performed between 1992 and 1998, was led by Emilio Ruiz de Arcaute Martínez at the request of the artist, and was later taken over by the City Council of San Sebastian. During the last year of the study, a 5 mm layer of rust was removed from the sculptures under the direction of the artist, who stressed that he did not wish for the work to lose its characteristic solidity (Ruiz de Arcaute 2002). The second study was commissioned by the Chillida-Leku Museum and carried out by INASMET-Tecnalia Foundation 2008³. The results showed that the work was covered by an outer patina of rust, the inner face of which was composed of a series of iron hydroxides that acted as a barrier, impeding water and oxygen from penetrating the steel (Ruiz de Arcaute 2008). The chemical composition selected for the material from which *The Comb of the Wind* was forged was clearly a wise choice, and has proved to be its greatest ally in protecting it from deterioration (Larrauri 2008). It was determined that the set of sculptures did not require restoration at that moment, and it was predicted that the work would last some 150 years more, during which time the greatest cause of deterioration would likely be due to mechanical issues prompted by the strong winds of the Cantabrian Sea (Idem 2008).

Equal Parallel: Guernica-Bengasi, (Richard Serra 1987)⁴ is a set of sculptures belonging to the permanent collection at the National Museum Sofía Queen Art Centre (NMCARS). It was bought in April 1986 for 450,000 marks, and was later appraised at a much higher price (MNCARS 2010). The fact that the piece was lost and later replicated by the artist makes this case an interesting one from the standpoint of conservation, security, and storage conditions. The work was comprised of four solid blocks of hot rolled weathering steel, with a total weight of thirty-eight tons. The four aligned slabs measured 148.5 cm (58.5 inches) in height. Two of the slabs were 148.5 cm (58.5 inches) wide and 24 cm (9.5 inches) thick, while the other two measured 500 x 24 cm (197 x 9.5 inches) (Idem 2010).

Equal Parallel: Guernica-Bengasi was shown in 1986 at the *References* exhibition, and later in 1990 for the inauguration of the National Museum Sofía Queen Art Centre following the museum's new building extension, and was later dismantled and placed into storage with the company Macarrón S.A (MNCARS 2010). In 2006 the museum began a new museological project which included an in-depth study of the collection, including a full analysis of available works and works in storage. This is when Serra's work was found to be missing. The storage company claimed not to know where it was (Europa Press 2008). The solution to this unfortunate incident arose from the agreement reached between the artist and the Spanish authorities. Serra agreed to replicate the work, producing an exact copy of the original, which was entrusted to a German company for a total of 78,000 euros, according to the Museum. The sculptor created the replica free of charge (Europa Press 2008). The new work has since then been displayed in one of the main exhibition rooms of the museum, and was also shown as part of a retrospective exhibition of the artist entitled *Richard Serra Sculptor: Forty Years* (2007), held at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York. Serra was, also granted the Order of Arts and Letters of

² See: <https://culturacientifica.com/2016/10/28/peine-del-viento-chillida-materia-forma-lugar>

³ The Foundation INASMET has its origin in the Technical Association of Founders of Guipúzcoa (ATFG). This association was born in 1962 and has its Metallurgical Testing and Analysis Laboratories in the Egia neighborhood of Donostia-San Sebastián (Gipúzcoa). Later it expands its activity to the field of technology and assistance for capital goods.

⁴ See: <https://www.museoreinasofia.es/coleccion/obra/equal-parallel-guernica-bengasi-igual-paralelo-guernica-bengasi>

Spain by the Spanish Ministry of Culture in recognition of his professional career and his contribution to spreading the culture and image of Spain abroad (Europa Press 2008).

David Lamelas's *To Pour Milk into a Glass* (1972–73) (Figure 1) is a 16 mm film (color, sound, 7'35'') and a set of 8 color prints (235 x 26 cm / 92.5 x 10 inches) taken from photograms of the film. The film is projected onto the wall of the exposition room using an analogue projector, and spectators see the projector, the film, and the photographs, which are hung near the projection.

This work of art belongs to the National Museum Sofía Queen Art Centre (Madrid), and was loaned to the José Guerrero Centre in Granada for the exposition *David Lamelas: In Place of Film*, which was held there in 2009 (Lamelas, DeBruyn, González and Romero 2011). On the occasion of the loan, and coinciding with the visit of the artist to Granada for the inauguration of the exhibition, the National Museum Sofía Queen Art Centre requested of the José Guerrero Centre to avail themselves of the opportunity to interview him, using a series of questions prepared by the Reina Sofia to obtain direct information regarding the criteria that Lamelas had used for displaying, installing, showing, and conserving his work.

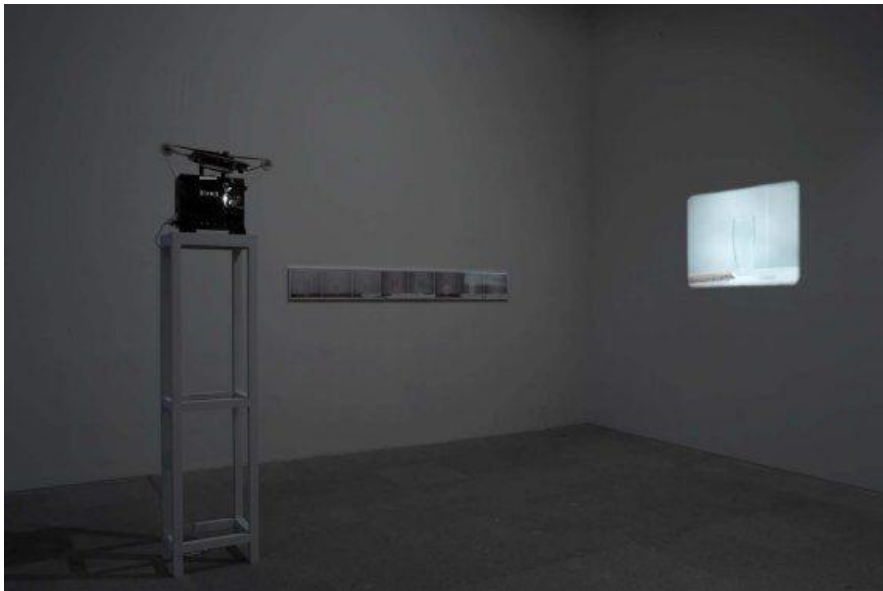


Figure 1: David Lamelas, *To Pour Milk into a Glass*, 1972. 16 mm film color, sound, (7' 35'') and a set of 8 colour prints forming a single work (235 x 26 cm / 92.5 x 10 inches). Measurements vary. MNCARS Collection

Source: Bellido 2006

During the interview, Lamelas spoke of his decision to maintain the work in its original analogue medium (16 mm acetate film) as long as possible, making copies of the film as often as needed for exhibition. He also said he would agree to transfer the film to a digital medium if necessary, and wished to know the total number of copies that were made of the work. He felt that the work had been well-presented at the José Guerrero Centre, and was aware of the deterioration that acetate film undergoes through use, environmental conditions, and the lack of 16 mm film projectors available on the market today (Bellido and Durán 2010). This interview has been carried out so that the conservator takes it into account when defining the conservation criteria of this work. The interview was quite successful, and the Museum obtained the information they required regarding the artist's opinion and wishes for the proper conservation of the work. This information will be sent to the National Museum Sofía Queen Art Centre by the author of this article, who interviewed the artist, for entry into the museum's documented sources.

Paisaje agramatical = Ungrammatical Landscape (Narelle Jubelin 2006) (Figure 2) is a temporary work of art by the Australian artist, shown at the Centro José Guerrero (Granada) in 2006, in which the author established a relationship between Guerrero and Australian artist Ian Burn (Jubelin 2006). Some elements of the work were different coloured squares and rectangles painted in acrylic directly on the walls of the Centre, marking the place where other works from previous exhibitions had hung, superimposing the paintings as a mixture of memories (Jubelin 2006). Other pieces in the exhibition included tiny landscapes embroidered in petit point and shown between two pieces of glass. There was also a large canvas by José Guerrero, entitled *Reconciliación*, which had been brought from New York and was exhibited unframed, resting on a platform on the floor. At the conclusion of the exhibition, the walls of the exhibition rooms were painted over in white, and Jubelin's work was lost (Gallastegui 2006).



Figure 2: Narelle Jubelin, *Paisaje agramatical = Ungrammatical Landscape*, 2006. Exhibition at the José Guerrero Centre. Temporary wall painting, and the work of the artist José Guerrero, entitled *Reconciliación*.
Source: Bellido, 2006.

This work (*Paisaje agramatical = Ungrammatical Landscape*) clearly presented various paradoxes. On the one hand, the contrast between the limited time during which the work was to be shown and the evocation of a dialog with past exhibitions held in the Centre, on the other hand, the fact of displaying an artistic intervention in a specific place, which could not be moved for later display elsewhere, juxtaposed with a painting by José Guerrero (*Reconciliación*), which had travelled on loan from the United States to Granada to share the space of this particular exhibition. What Jubelin intended with this exhibit was to hold an “impossible conversation” (Gallastegui 2006, 52), referring to the pieces painted on the gallery walls. In contrast, *Reconciliación* was treated in the Centre itself to consolidate portions of the paint layer, which had begun to show signs of flaking and delaminating following its transfer from the US. The problems of conservation of Guerrero's work were due to a lack of priming and the absence of a stretcher frame, together with distress caused by packing and shipping, as it had to be rolled in order to be shipped from North America.

Conclusions

The contemporary works must therefore be treated with the proper care and preventive conservation in order to safeguard their qualities and ensure that they are properly preserved for the future. These pieces exhibit many of the same difficulties of conservation as other works of art, but they are also exposed to more specific wear and tear given their innovative material characteristics and format (materials, mediums, location), concept (message), and the artist's intention (preserve, document and register, or allow to deteriorate), as well as to deterioration from external causes such as negligence, a lack of proper conservation measures, or abandonment. We must therefore work more closely to provide specialized training in preventive conservation for the artists themselves, and for those in charge of promoting, handling, packing, shipping, and exhibiting works of art. This issue should be addressed not only in the field of museology and conservation-restoration, as has been the case to date; rather, we need more and better-qualified trainers to teach this subject matter in centres devoted to art studies, artistic promotion, and conservation-restoration. The restorer-conservator must be aware of the criteria and measures required for each individual work to be treated or preserved, following standard procedures, but considering each work specifically in order to apply the most appropriate measure in each case. This can be achieved by performing studies prior to designing a plan for conservation and carrying it out, first analysing the material characteristics through scientific tests and investigating the work's artistic intent. The restoration team must also be aware of the conceptual message and the artistic project of the work, as well as the intention of the author regarding its conservation. Conservation work must also be based on the conservation background of the piece (record of previous treatments), and a proper assessment of the condition the work is in before undertaking any actions for restoration. Finally, any treatment of the work must be documented. Taken together, these measures will help to properly restore and conserve works of contemporary art, preserving artistic intention and conserving concept and material characteristics (Llamas 2009).

It is now easy to obtain graphic documentation, photography, filming, and recording of action pieces of contemporary art such as performance art and happenings, but other works must be documented as well. Many works are created specifically for registration, such as video sculpture, video performance, and movie filming as a transmissible material medium charged with visual information, which remains after the fact, carrying artistic value and meaning, and in some cases, economic worth. The visual register and documentation of an immaterial and temporary work questions the consideration of "unique and exclusive work of art," given the possibility of reproducing the images and assisting in the work's diffusion. We must therefore update analogue formats of film, photography, slides, projections, and videos to digital formats, given the obsolescence of these former mediums of presentation and screening. We should likewise create controlled back-up copies, and define the intellectual property of works created in digital format. In my opinion, printed catalogues and publication on the internet are the most convenient and available methods for ensuring that these works reach the public eye without the viewer having to be physically present, and more effort is now devoted to these methods. We should bear in mind, however, that these channels have certain limitations, and for reasons of capacity or space, some of these texts or archives may also be lost with the passage of time, meaning that it is similarly recommendable to create duplicate copies to be stored in various formats. Criteria and intervention in the conservation of contemporary works of art is in constant evolution, and we are seeing new treatments which include re-edition, allowing a work to deteriorate, reproduction, replacing elements (edible, technical, natural, industrial, etc.), documentation, filming, and registration. In-depth studies are still needed, however, in order to share experiences and propose common courses of action for the conservation of works that are created solely in digital form.

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